

You have heard of the Danish Kings
in the old days and how
they were great warriors.
Shield, the son of Sheaf,
took many an enemy's chair,
terrified many a warrior,
after he was found an orphan.
He prospered under the sky
until people everywhere
listened when he spoke.
He was a good king!

Shield had a son,
child for his yard,
sent by God
to comfort the people,
to keep them from fear--
Grain was his name;
he was famous
throughout the North.
Young princes should do as he did--
give out treasures
while they're still young
so that when they're old
people will support them
in time of war.
A man prospers
by good deeds
in any nation.

Shield died at his fated hour,
went to God still strong.
His people carried him to the sea,
which was his last request.
In the harbor stood
a well-built ship,
icy but ready for the sea.
They laid Shield there,
propped him against the mast
surrounded by gold
and treasure from distant lands.
I've never heard
of a more beautiful ship,
[filled](#) with shields, swords,
and coats of mail, [gifts](#)
to him for his long trip.

No doubt he had a little more
than he did as a child
when he was sent out,
a naked orphan in an empty boat.
Now he had a golden banner
high over his head, was,
sadly by a [rich](#) people,
given to the sea.
The wisest alive can't tell
where a death ship goes.

Grain ruled the Danes
a long time after his father's death,
and to him was born
the great Healfdene, fierce in battle,
who ruled until he was old.
Healfdene had four children--
Heorogar, Hrothgar, Halga the Good,
and a daughter who married
Onela, King of the Swedes.

Hrothgar Becomes King of the Danes

After Hrothgar became king
he won many battles:
his friends and family
willingly obeyed him;
his childhood friends
became famous soldiers.

So Hrothgar decided
he would build a mead-hall,
the greatest the world had
ever seen, or even imagined.
There he would share out
to young and old alike
all that God gave him
(except for public lands and men's
lives).

I have heard that orders
went out far and wide;
tribes throughout the world
set to work on that building.
And it was built, the world's
greatest mead-hall.

And that great man
called the building
"Herot," the hart.

After it was built,
Hrothgar did what he said
he would: handed out gold
and treasure at huge feasts.
That hall was high-towered,
tall and wide-gabled
(though destruction awaited,
fire and swords of family trouble;
and outside in the night waited
a tortured spirit of hell).

The words of the poet,
the sounds of the [harp](#),
the joy of people echoed.
The poet told how the world
came to be, how God made the earth
and the water surrounding,
how He set the sun and the moon
as lights for people
and adorned the earth
with limbs and leaves for everyone.
Hrothgar's people lived in joy,
happy until that wanderer of the
wasteland,
Grendel the demon, possessor of the
moors,
began his crimes.

He was of a race of monsters
exiled from mankind by God--
He was of the race of Cain,
that man punished for
murdering his brother.
From that family comes
all evil beings--
monsters, elves, zombies.
Also the giants who
fought with God and got
repaid with the flood.

PART ONE: GRENDEL

Grendel Attacks

One night, after a beer party,
the Danes settled in the hall
for sleep; they knew no sorrows.
The evil creature, grim and hungry,
grabbed thirty warriors
and went home laughing.

At dawn, when the Danes learned
of Grendel's strength,
there was great weeping.
The old king sat sadly,
crying for his men. Bloody
footprints were found.

That was bad enough,
but the following night
Grendel killed more--
blinded by sin,
he felt no remorse.
(You can [bet](#) the survivors
started sleeping elsewhere.)
So Grendel ruled,
fighting right,
one against many,
and the greatest hall
in all [the earth](#)
stood empty at night.

Twelve years this went on,
Hrothgar suffering
the greatest of sorrows.

Poets sang sad songs
throughout the world,
how Grendel tormented Hrothgar;
how no warrior,
no matter how brave,
could kill Grendel.
How Grendel wasn't
about to stop,
or pay damages.
Grendel kept ambushing from his lair,
the moors which lay in perpetual
darkness.

Then, the cruelest of all injuries,
he moved into the hall--
stayed there every night
(though God would never allow
such an evil thing
to actually touch the throne).

Hrothgar was broken;
council after council proposed
what to do against the attacks.
They even went to heathen temples,
worshipped idols, and called
to the Devil for [help](#).
The Danes forgot God.
(Woe be to those who go
to the fire's embrace,
even in great distress--
There is no consolation there.)

No counselor, no warrior
could destroy the evil.
They wept and seethed.

Beowulf Hears of Grendel

But a warrior of Hygelac's
heard of Grendel's doings;
he was the strongest of men
alive in that day,
mighty and noble.
That man called for a ship,
said he would cross the ocean
and help the king who needed help.
Wise men urged him
to that adventure
though he was dear to them.
They examined omens
and whetted him on.

So the good Geat chose
the bravest warriors,
fourteen of them,
and that crafty sailor
led them to the land's [brim](#),
to the ship.
They readied the ship

on the waves under the cliffs
and the warriors stood at the prow
as the water wound against the sand.
The warriors [bore](#)
into the ship's bosom
bright weapons,
fitted armor.

The men shoved
the well-braced ship
out on the journey
they'd dreamed of.
The foamy-necked ship
went out like a bird
so that the next day
its curved prow
had gone so far
that the seafarers saw land,
shining shore cliffs
and steep mountains.
Their journey was already over
and the Geat warriors
pulled their ship to the shore
and stood on land
in their rattling shirts,
their war-clothes. They
thanked God for an easy trip.

From his wall the sea-guard of the
Danes,
protector of the cliffs,
saw bright shields
and ready war [dress](#)
coming over the gang plank
and he wondered
who those men were.
Hrothgar's warrior rode
to shore on his horse.

Shaking a mighty spear, he spoke:
"Who are you, in armor,
who come over the sea-road
in that steep keel?
Listen: I guard here
so that no forces
hostile to the Danes

may raid. Never has
one so openly brought
a ship's army, warriors,
without the permission of my kinsmen.
And never have I seen
a greater man on earth,
any man in armor,
than is one among you.
Unless I'm wrong,
that is no hall-man,
just wearing armor--
his stature is peerless.
I wish to know your lineage now
so I know you are not spies
going into the land of the Danes.
You far-dwellers, seafarers,
hear my simple thought:
you had best hurry to tell me
where you come from."

Beowulf, leader of the host
unlatched his word-hoard:
"As to kin, we are of the Geat nation,
Hygelac's hearth-companions.
My father was a leader well known
among the people: Edgtheow.
He stayed many winters
before he went away,
aged, from the court.
Every wise man readily remembers
him throughout the earth.
We have come with friendly hearts
to see your lord, Healfdene's son,
protector of the people.
Be good counsel to us:
we have come on a great errand
to the king of the Danes.
I think it foolish
to keep secrets. You know
if it is true what we have heard,
that a dark enemy in the nights
works violence and slaughter
on the Danes. . . . Perhaps
in kindness I may advise Hrothgar
how he, wise and famous,
may overcome this enemy--

if change will ever come,
relief from this evil--
and how this seething sorrow
might become cool.
Otherwise, he will suffer tribulation
as long as he lives in that high place,
the best of houses."

The protector of the coast,
still on his horse, spoke
(a wise shield warrior,
one who thinks well,
must judge two things:
works and words):
"I see that you are a band
friendly to the lord of the Danes.
Go forth, bearing arms and equipment.
I will guide you. Also,
I will order my men
to protect your ship,
that new-tarred boat on the sand,
until it bears you again
back over the water streams
with its curved wooden neck,
back to the land of the Geats--
if it be granted that you
endure the battle."

They left then the well-made ship
pulling at its rope.
On the gold-adorned helmets
figures of boars shone,
those guards over war-like minds.

The men excitedly marched until
they saw that ornamented hall,
the finest building on earth,
that glittered light over many lands,
where the mighty one waited.

The one brave in battle pointed
toward the resplendent hall;
the guard of the coast turned
his horse and said after them:
"It is time for me to go.
May the Father Omnipotent hold you

safe and sound in kindness!
I will go back to the sea
to hold against hostile bands."

Beowulf Comes to Herot

The paved road guided the men.
Their war-coats shone,
the hard locks ringing
as they came toward the hall.
The sea-weary ones set
their broad, strong shields
against the building's wall,
then sat down on benches,
their armor resounding.
They stood their spears together,
ash wood tipped with gray,
an iron troop.

Then a proud Danish warrior asked them:
"From where have you carried
these gold-inlaid shields,
these shirts of mail,
masked helmets, and battle shafts?
I am Hrothgar's [messenger](#) and officer.
Never have I seen braver strangers.
I expect you're here
to find adventure, not asylum."

[The brave one](#) answered him,
he of the proud Geats tribe,
hard under his helmet:
"We are Hygelac's table companions.
Beowulf is my name.
I will declare to the great lord,
Healfdene's son, my errand,
if your prince will greet us."

Wulfgar spoke--he was
of the Wendla tribe
and known to many
for fighting and wisdom--
"I will ask the lord of the Danes,
the giver of rings,

if he will [reward](#) your journey
and speedily make his wishes known."

Wulfgar went quickly
to where Hrothgar sat,
old and gray, with
his most trusted men.
He went before the face
of the Dane's lord,
knowing the customs of warriors.
Wulfgar spoke to his friendly lord:
"From far over the sea's expanse
has come a man of the Geats,
a chief of warriors named Beowulf.
He and his men have, my lord,
asked to exchange words with you.
Do not refuse the request,
Hrothgar! These men look worthy
of a warrior's esteem. Indeed,
the chief among them,
he who guides them, is strong."

Hrothgar, guard of the Danes, spoke:
"I knew him when he was a boy.
His father is called Edgtheow.
To that man Hrethel of the Geats
gave his only daughter.
Now his offspring has come
in bravery seeking a loyal friend.
Seafarers who took [gifts](#)
to the Geats say that he
has the strength of thirty men
in his hand grip.
Holy God, out of kindness,
has sent this man to us
to save us from Grendel's terror.
I shall give treasures
to that brave man
for his impetuous courage.
Be you in haste: go,
call in this band of kinsmen.
Say to them that they are welcome
to the Danish people."

Wulfgar, famous warrior,
went to the door:

"My victorious lord,
prince of the Danes,
[bids](#) me say he knows
your noble descent and
that brave men who
come over the sea swells
are welcome to him.
Come with your war dress,
under your helmets,
to see Hrothgar, but
let your war shields
and wooden spears await
the outcome of your talk."

The mighty one arose,
surrounded by warriors,
a mighty band of men.
Some remained with the weapons,
as the brave one ordered.
The rest hastened,
as the man guided,
under Herot's roof.

The great warrior went,
hard under his helmet,
until he stood within
in his shining coat of mail,
his armor-net sewn by smiths.

Beowulf spoke:
"I am Hygelac's kinsman and warrior.
I have undertaken many
glorious deeds. I learned
of Grendel in my native land.
Seafarers say this place,
the best of halls,
stands idle and useless
after sundown. Hrothgar,
the wise men among my people
advised that I seek you
because they know my strength--
they saw me come from battles
stained in the blood of my enemies,
when I destroyed a family of giants,
when I endured pain all night,
killing water monsters,

grinding them to bits,
to avenge for the Geats
those who asked for misery.
And now I shall, alone,
fight Grendel. I ask you,
lord of the Danes,
protector of this people,
for only one favor:
that you refuse me not,
fair friend of the people,
do not refuse those who
have come so far the chance
to cleanse Herot.
I have heard that the monster
in his recklessness uses no weapons.
I, therefore, to amuse Hygelac my lord,
scorn to carry sword or shield,
but I shall seize my enemy
in my hand grip and fight,
enemy against enemy,
and let God decide
who shall be taken by death.
I expect, if he wins, that
he will eat fearlessly of
the Geat people in this hall
as he often has of yours.
Nor will you need,
if death takes me,
worry about a burial--
that solitary one
will carry my corpse,
dripping with blood,
to a ruthless feast.
If battle takes me,
send this best of war garments,
this shirt of mail,
to Hygelac--it is
an inheritance from Hrethel
and the work of Weland.
Fate always goes as it will!"

Hrothgar, protector of the Danes, spoke:
"Because of past kindness
and deeds done, you have come,
my friend Beowulf. By a killing
your father brought about

the greatest of feuds.
He was the killer of Heatholaf
among the Wylfings. The Geats,
for fear of war, would not have him,
so he sought us Danes
over the rolling waves. . .
back when I first ruled,
as a youth, this wide kingdom
of the Danish people,
this treasure city of heroes.
Heorogar was dead then,
my older brother,
the son of Healfdene.
(He was better than I!)

I paid money to settle
your father's feud, sent
treasure over the water's back
to the Wylfings. Your father
swore oaths to me.
It is a sorrow for me
to say to any man
what Grendel has done--
humiliations in Herot--
hostile attacks on my hall warriors
until they are diminished,
swept away in Grendel's horror.
God may easily put an end
to that mad ravager's deeds.
Quite often have men boasted,
over their ale-cups,
drunk on beer,
that they would meet
Grendel's attack in the hall
with grim swords. But
in the morning when the daylight
shone, the mead hall was stained
in gore, the hall wet with
the blood of battle. And I had
a few less loyal men.
Sit now and feast,
glory of warriors,
and speak your thoughts
as your heart tells you."

So a bench was cleared for
the Geats and the brave men
sat down proud in their strength.

A warrior did his duty,
bearing an etched cup
and pouring sweet drink.
The poet sang in a clear voice,
and in Herot there was the joy
of brave men, Danes and Geats.

Unferth, Ecglaf's son,
who sat at the feet
of the king of the Danes,
spoke, unloosing a battle-rune
(The bravery of Beowulf
was a vexation to him
because he envied any man
on this middle-earth who had
more glory than himself):
"Are you that Beowulf
who struggled with Brecca
in the broad sea
in a swimming contest?
The one who, out of pride,
risked his life in the deep water
though both friends and enemies
told you it was too dangerous?
Are you the one who hugged
the sea, gliding through the boiling
waves of the winter's swell?
You and Brecca toiled
seven nights in the sea,
and he, with more strength,
overcame you. And
in the morning the waves
bore him to the Heathrames
from whence he went home
to the Brondings, beloved of them,
to his people and mead hall.
Brecca fulfilled all his boast.
Because of this, though you have
everywhere withstood the battle storm,
I don't expect much from you
if you dare await
Grendel in the night."

Beowulf spoke:

"Well, my friend Unferth, you
have said a good many things
about Brecca and that trip,
drunk on beer as you are.
Truth to tell, I had more strength
but also more hardships in the waves.
He and I were both boys
and boasted out of our youth
that we two would risk
our lives in the sea.
And so we did.
With naked swords in hand,
to ward off whales,
we swam. Brecca could not
out-swim me, nor could I
out-distance him. And thus
we were, for five nights.
It was cold weather and
the waves surged, driving us
apart, and the North wind came
like a battle in the night.
Fierce were the waves
and the anger of the sea fish
stirred. My coat of mail,
adorned in gold
and locked hard by hand,
helped against those foes.
A hostile thing drew me
to the bottom in its grim grip,
but it was granted to me
to reach it with my sword's
point. The battle storm
destroyed that mighty
sea beast through my hand.
And on and on evil
things threatened me.
I served them with my sword
as it was right to do.
Those wicked things
had no joy of the feast,
did not sit at the sea's
bottom eating my bones.
When the morning came
my sword had put

many to sleep, and even today
in that fiord they don't
hinder seafarers. Light
shone from the East,
that bright beacon of God,
and the seas subsided.
I saw cliffs, the windy
walls of the sea.
Fate often saves
an undoomed man if
his courage holds.
Anyway, with my sword
I slew nine sea monsters.
Nor have I heard tell
of a harder fight
or a more distressed man
ever to go in the sea.
I survived the grasp
of hostiles, and the sea
bore me, the surging water,
weary, into the land of the Finns.
I have not heard
anything about you
surviving such battles,
such terrors of the sword.
Neither Brecca nor you have
performed such deeds in
war sport or with shining swords.
Yet I don't boast about it.
But you, your own brother's
murderer, shall be damned
and burn in Hell no matter
how strong your wit is.
I say to you truly,
son of Ecglaf, that wretch
Grendel would never have done
such horrors, such humiliations
on you chief, if you were so
fierce as you suppose.
Grendel has found
he need not fear feud,
any sword storm,
from your people.
He takes his toll,
showing no mercy
to the Danish folk.

He enjoys himself,
killing and feasting,
and expects no fight
from the Danes.
But I shall offer him
the battle of a Geat in
strength and courage.
When I get done with him,
anyone who wishes may
happily go into the mead hall
as morning shines
on the children of men.
On that day the sun
will be clothed in radiance
as it shines from the South!"

The giver of treasure, Hrothgar,
gray-haired and brave in battle,
felt glad--the chief of the Danes
could count on help.
That guardian of the folk
heard in Beowulf firm resolution.

The men laughed, the din
resounding, and the words
turned friendly.
Wealhtheow, Hrothgar's queen,
came forth, mindful of kin,
adorned in gold to greet the men.
First she gave the cup
to the country's guardian,
that one dear to his people,
biding joy in his beer drinking.
That king famous for victories
happily took the feast cup.
Then that woman of the Helmings
went round to each, young and old,
sharing the precious cup.
In proper time that ring-adorned
queen excellent in mind
brought the mead cup to Beowulf.
She greeted him, thanking
God that her wish had
been fulfilled, that finally
a hero had come who

she could count on
to stop Grendel's crimes.

Beowulf, fierce in war,
received the cup from Wealhtheow
and spoke eagerly of battle:
"I resolved when I set to sea
in my boat with my warriors
that I, alone, will fulfill
the wish of your people. . .
or die in the foe's grasp.
I shall perform the deeds
of a hero or I have passed
my last day in this mead hall."

The woman liked these words,
this brave speech of the Geat.
The gold-adorned folk queen
went to sit by her lord.

Now again, as it had been
in the old days, brave words
were spoken and the people were
happy.
The gladness of warriors continued
until the son of Healfdene
wished to go to his evening rest.
Hrothgar knew the wretch
planned to attack the hall
after the sun had set,
night over the hall,
when the shadows came
striding dark under the clouds.

All the company arose.
Warrior then saluted warrior,
Hrothgar wishing Beowulf luck
in his fight for the hall.
Hrothgar said these words:
"Never, since I have been able
to lift shield, have I entrusted
this hall, this mighty house
of the Danes, to any man.
But now I entrust it to you.
Have and hold this best of houses.
Keep fame in mind, watch

against the foe, and make
your valor known! You shall
lack nothing if you
survive this deed."

Then Hrothgar, protector
of the Danes, and his band
of warriors left the hall.
Hrothgar sought the queen's bed.

God, as men learned,
had chosen a man
who could fight Grendel.
The chief of the Geats,
indeed, trusted his strength
and God's favor.
Beowulf took off his armor,
off his helmet, handed
his figured sword to the attendant.
Beowulf, that good man, then
spoke some brave words
before he got in bed:
"I don't claim myself
any lower in strength or brave deeds
than Grendel. Therefore, I will
not kill him with a sword,
though I easily might.
Though he is famous for strength,
he knows no weapons to cut a shield.
If he chooses to forego a sword,
if he dares seek me without weapon,
then we two shall fight without,
and wise God, that king, shall
choose who shall win glory."

The battle-brave one lay down then,
a pillow received the warrior's face,
and his brave men sought rest
around him in the hall. Not one
thought he would seek home again,
see his people or birthplace.
Far too many Danes had already
died there. But the Lord would
give victory to the Geat people,
helping and supporting, so that
one man's craft overcame all.

(It is well known that God
always rules the race of men.)

Came then striding in the night
the [walker](#) of darkness.
In that gabled hall
the warriors slept,
those who guarded the hall. . .
all but one.

It was well known among men
that, if God willed it not,
no one could drag
that demon to the shadows.
But Beowulf watched
in anger, waiting
the battle's outcome.

Came then from the moor
under the misty hills
Grendel stalking under
the weight of God's anger.
That wicked ravager
planned to ensnare
many of the race of men
in the high hall.

He strode under the clouds,
seeking eagerly, till he came to
the wine-hall, the treasure-hall
of men decorated in gold.
Nor was it the first time he
had sought Hrothgar's home.
But never in his life before
--or since--
did he find worse luck!

Came then to [the building](#)
that creature bereft of joys.
When he touched it with his hands
the door gave way at once
though its bands were forged
in fire. Intending evil,
enraged, he swung the door wide,
stood at the building's mouth.
Quickly the foe moved

across the well-made floor,
in an angry mood--a horrible light,
like fire, in his eyes.
He saw the many warriors in the
building,
that band of kinsmen asleep
together, and his spirit laughed:
that monster expected
to rip life from the body of each
one before morning came.
He expected a plentiful meal.
(It was his fate
that he eat no more
of the race of men
after that night. . .)

The mighty one, Beowulf, watched,
waiting to see how that wicked one
would go about [starting](#).
Nor did the wretch delay,
but set about seizing
a sleeping warrior unawares
and bit into his bone locks,
drinking the streams of blood,
then swallowing huge morsels
of flesh. Quickly he ate that man,
even to his hands and feet.

Forward Grendel came,
stepping nearer. Then
he reached for Beowulf.

Beowulf grasped his arm
and sat up. The criminal
knew he had not met
in this middle-earth
another with such a grip.
Grendel's spirit was afraid
and his heart eager
to get away, to flee
to his hiding place, flee
to the devils he kept
for company. Never had he met
a man such as this.

Beowulf then kept in mind
the speeches he had made
in the evening and stood
upright, firmly grasping
Grendel's hand until
the fingers broke.

The monster strove to escape.
Beowulf stepped closer. That
famous monster suddenly wanted
to disappear into the fens.
He realized the power of those hands,
the wrathful grip he was in.
Grendel felt sorry
he had made a trip to Herot.

That hall of warriors dinned.
All the Danes of the city,
all the brave ones, feared [disaster](#).
The building resounded.
It is a wonder the wine-hall
withstood the battle,
that the beautiful building
did not fall to the ground.
But it was made fast,
within and without,
with iron bands
forged with great skill.
I have heard say
many a mead bench
adorned in gold
went flying when
those hostiles fought.
No wise man had ever thought
that splendid building could
be damaged (unless a fire
should swallow it).

The din rose louder, the Danes stood
in dreadful terror--everyone
heard lamentation, a terrifying
song, through the wall:
Grendel, Hell's friend,
God's enemy, sang in defeat,
bemoaning his wound.
That man, mightiest

of warriors alive, held fast.
He would not
for any reason
allow his murderous visitor
to escape alive,
to keep the days of his life.

Beowulf's warriors brandished
many a sword, inheritances
from the ancient days,
trying to protect their chief,
but that did no good: they
could not have known, those
brave warriors as they fought,
striking from all sides, seeking
to take Grendel's soul, that
no battle sword could harm him--
he had enchantment against
the edges of weapons.

The end of Grendel's life was
miserable, and he would travel
far into the hands of fiends.
Grendel, the foe of God, who had
long troubled the spirits of men
with his crimes, found that
his body could not stand against
the hand grip of that warrior.

Each was hateful to the other
alive. The horrible monster endured
a wound: the bone-locks
of his shoulder gave way,
and his sinews sprang out.
The glory of battle went to
Beowulf, and Grendel,
mortally wounded,
sought his sad home
under the fen slope.
He knew surely that
his life had reached its end,
the number of his days gone.

The hope of the Danes
had come to pass--He
who came from far had

cleansed Hrothgar's hall
and saved it from affliction.
They rejoiced it that
night's work. Beowulf had
fulfilled his promise
to the Danes and all
the distress they had endured,
all the trouble and sorrow,
had reached an end.

The fact was plain when
Beowulf laid that arm
and shoulder down, there
altogether, Grendel's claw,
under the vaulted roof.

The Warriors Rejoice

I have heard say that
on that morning warriors
came from near and far
to look at the wonder.
Grendel's death made
no warrior sad.

They looked at the huge footprints
and the path he had taken,
dragging himself wearily away
after he had been overcome in battle.
The fated fugitive's bloody tracks
led into the water-monster's mere.
There bloody water boiled,
a horrible swirl of waves
mingled with hot gore.
That doomed one had died,
deprived of joy,
in his fen refuge, his heathen
soul taken into Hell.

After seeing that place
the warriors once again
rode their horses to Herot.
They spoke of Beowulf's
glorious deed, often saying
that no man under the sky's
expanse, North nor South

between the seas, no man
who bore a shield, was more
worthy of a kingdom. They,
however, never found fault
with the gracious Hrothgar--
he was a good king.

The warriors let their
bay horses go, a contest
for the best horse,
galloping through whatever
path looked fair.
Sometimes a king's man, a warrior
covered in glory who knew
the old traditions, would be
reminded of an ancient song,
and he would call up words adorned
in truth. The man would think
of Beowulf's deeds and quickly
compose a skillful tale in words.

Then he sang of things he'd heard
about Sigemund's valorous deeds,
untold things about Weals's son,
his struggles, his wide journeys and
feuds.

The singer told things the children
of men did not know, except for
Fitela, Sigemund's nephew, who
stood with him in battle.

With swords those two felled
many from the race of giants.
After Sigemund's death day
not a little fame sprang to him,
about his hardy fight and killing
of a dragon, keeper of a hoard.
Under gray stone that prince alone
engaged in that audacious deed,
not even Fitela with him.

Anyway, it happened that
Sigemund's sword went clear through
the huge dragon and
that splendid iron
stuck in the wall.
The dragon died violently.

By brave deeds the hero
won a ring hoard for himself.
He bore into a ship's bosom
those bright treasures
of the Weal kin,
and the dragon melted
of its own heat.

Sigemund was by far the most
renowned adventurer. N He had
first prospered under King Heremod,
but that man's strength
and victory subsided.
Among the Jutes
Heremod was betrayed
into enemy hands
and put to death.
Sorrow oppressed him too long.
He became a trouble to his people.
Many a wise man
bemoaned the old days
when Heremod had taken
the protector's position
to hold the treasure
of the Danish kingdom.
He had loved the Geats
more than his own people:
evil had seized him.
Thus told the song.

Sometimes the warriors raced
their horses on the yellow road.
The morning sped away.
Many a brave warrior
went to the high hall
to see the wonder.
So also the king himself,
the keeper of the rings,
leaving the queen's rooms,
went with his famous company.
And the queen also
with a troop of maidens
walked among the mead seats.

Hrothgar, standing on the [steps](#),
seeing the golden roof

and Grendel's hand, spoke:
"For this sight I give
thanks to the Almighty.
I have suffered much
from Grendel's scourge.
God, the glorious protector,
works wonder after wonder.
Only yesterday I expected
these woes would never end--
this best of [houses](#)
stood shining in blood
and all my wise ones said
we could never protect
the people and land
from the [work](#) of demons
and evil spirits. Now
a warrior, through God's might,
has performed a deed we,
in our wisdom, could not contrive.
The woman who [bore](#) you,
Beowulf, if she yet lives,
may say the Eternal Maker
was kind in her child bearing.
Now, Beowulf, best of warriors,
I love you as a son:
have from this moment
a new kinship. Nor will there be
any lack of earthly things
I have power over.
Often I have given [gifts](#)
to a lesser warrior, weaker
in fighting. You have, by
your deeds, achieved fame
forever. May God repay you
always as He has just now!"

Beowulf, son of Ecgtheow, spoke:
"We have done this work of valor
against the strength of an uncanny
foe. I wish you might have seen
this enemy killed in his gear.
I planned to bind him quickly
to his deathbed with hand grips.
I thought I could pin him down
struggling for life without
his body's escape. But I could not

keep him from going; the Creator
did not will it, and I could not
hold him firmly enough. The foe
was too powerful in his going.
However, he left behind his hand
to save his life, and his arm
and shoulder, though that won't buy
the wretch much comfort.
The evil-doer, afflicted by sin,
won't live much longer;
pain with its strong grip
has seized him in deadly bonds,
and there shall he await,
guilty of [crime](#), the great judgment,
how the bright creator
will decree. . . "

Then was the warrior silent
in speaking of his war-like deed,
and the [nobles](#) beheld
the hand at the high roof.
On each of the foe's fingers
were nails like steel.
Everyone agreed the heathen's
claw was horrible
and that the wretch's
bloody battle hand
could not be harmed
by the best of iron.

Entertainment in Herot

Then it was ordered
that Herot be decorated.
Many there were,
men and women, who
prepared that guest-hall.
Gold ornaments shone,
wondrous sights on the walls,
for people to look at.
That bright building
had been much hurt,
though its bands
were made of iron.
Hinges had been sprung
apart. The roof alone

had escaped damage before
that monster, wicked outlaw,
turned in flight
despairing of his life.
(Fate is not easy
to flee from,
try it who will--
the children of men,
bearers of souls,
must go to the prepared place,
his body rest
fast in the grave,
sleep after the feast.)

Then came the time
that Hrothgar himself
went to the feast.
Never have I heard
of a greater company
gathered around a treasure giver.
Great ones sat at the benches
and rejoiced with the cup.
Those brave kinsmen
drank many a mead cup
in the high hall with
Hrothgar and Hrothulf, his nephew.
Herot was [filled](#) with friends
(treachery had not yet
come to the Danes).

Hrothgar gave Beowulf
a gilded banner,
decorated battle flag,
as reward for victory.
Also a helmet, armor, and
a famous, precious sword
were given to the hero
before that company.
Around the helmet's top
as head-protection was
a wrap of metal bands
so that no sharpened swords
could harm him
in the battle storm
when the shield-warriors fight.

Beowulf drank the cup.
He had no reason to be
ashamed among warriors
for taking those rich gifts.
Never have I heard
of golden treasure given
at the ale bench in
a more friendly way.

The king ordered eight horses
with gold-plaited bridles
led into the hall.
On one sat a saddle
inlaid with jewels--
it had been Hrothgar's
when he had gone to sword play.
Never had he failed
at the front
when corpses fell.
Hrothgar gave horses and weapons,
telling Beowulf to enjoy them well.
Thus like a man
that great prince,
treasure giver of heroes,
repaid Beowulf for his battle,
and no man who tells the truth.
will blame him. Then that chief of nobles
gave to each one on the mead bench
who had taken the ocean's way
with Beowulf an heirloom
and ordered that the one
Grendel killed in wickedness
should be paid for in gold.
(Grendel would have killed
more of them if wise God,
and Beowulf's courage,
had not prevented it.
The Creator then ruled the race of men,
as He does yet; and, therefore,
understanding is best:
the forethought of mind.
Much shall he abide,
from friends and foes,
who lives long in these
days of strife as he
makes use of this world!)

**The Poet Sings Of Old Trouble, how
Hildeburh, married to stop a feud
between Jutes and Danes, saw her
husband, brother, and son killed**

In the presence of the battle leader
Hrothgar's poet touched
the harp and recited
many songs for entertainment
in the hall. He sang
of Finn's offspring and how
Hnaef of the Danes fell
in a Jute battlefield.
Indeed Hildeburh did not have
much cause to praise
the good faith of her in-laws,
the Jutes: though blameless,
she was deprived of dear ones
by the shield play, both her son
and Hnaef, her brother, in fate
fell to spear wounds.
That was a sad woman.

Not without cause, after
morning came, when she could
see under the sky,
did she bewail the decree
of fate, the slaughter
of kinsmen. At first she had
possessed the world's joy.
War took all but
a few of the Jute men
so they could not
fight the Dane Hengst nor
protect the survivors.

But Hengst offered
them a deal: that
the Jutes would make
room for the Danes
in the beer hall and
that with gifts
King Finn would honor
Hengst's men, rings,
entertainment, and treasures
of plated gold as if

they were his kin.
Both sides agreed to the peace.

Finn declared to Hengst
honest oaths that the survivors
would be held in honor
and that no man,
by words nor works,
would break the peace
nor in cruelty mention
that they were being friendly
with the killer of their king,
since a winter freeze had
forced it. If any of the Jutes
in daring speech mentioned it,
then the edge of the sword
would settle the matter.

A funeral pyre was readied
and gold brought from the hoard.
The best of the Danes
were ready for the pyre.
At the fire were blood stained
shirts of mail, boar images
all golden and iron-hard.
Not a few noble ones
had been destroyed by wounds!

Hildeburh ordered her son
committed to the heat
of Hneaf's pyre; his muscles burned
at the shoulder of his uncle.
The woman mourned,
sang lamentation,
as the warrior ascended,
waned to the clouds,
as the greatest of death fires
roared on the barrow.
Heads melted,
wounds, hostile bites
to the body, opened
and burst; blood
sprang out. Fire,
the greediest of spirits,
swallowed everything,

of both peoples, there together.
Their power had passed away.

The warriors departed,
bereft of friends,
to seek shelter
in the Jute land,
Jute homes and stronghold.
So Hengst spent
a slaughter-stained winter
with Finn because
he could not leave.
He thought of home
but could not go
in a ring-prowed ship
against the sea storm,
against the wind.
The water waves locked
in icy bindings until
another year came
to the gardens,
as they do yet,
glorious bright weather
to watch over the hall.

When winter had passed
and earth's bosom turned
fair, the adventurer was
eager to go, the guest
from the dwelling, but first
Hengst thought more of revenge
for injury than of a sea journey,
how he might cause
a hostile meeting
with the Jutes
to repay them with iron.
So it was he did not complain
when the son of Hunlaf
laid Battle Bright,
the best of swords,
whose edges were
known to the Jutes,
on his lap.
So it was that Finn,
bold in spirit,
in his turn met

a cruel death by sword
in his own home
after Guthlaf and Oslaf
complained of their sorrows,
blaming their woes
on that sea journey.
A restless spirit is not
restrained by the breast.

Then was the hall reddened
with the life blood of enemies.
King Finn was slain
and Hildeburh taken.
The Danish warriors
carried to their ships
all the goods they could find
in the house, precious jewels.
They took the queen
on a sea journey
back to her people.

The poet's song was sung,
the mirth rose, bench noise,
as the cup bearers offered
wine from wondrous vessels.

Then Wealhtheow came out
under a golden crown
to where the good men sat,
nephew and uncle (at that time
there was peace between the two,
each still true to the other).

Unferth the spokesman
sat at Hrothgar's feet--
everyone considered him
brave in spirit though
he had not been kind to
his kin at the sword's play.

Spoke then the queen of the Danes:
"Receive this cup,
my dear lord,
giver of treasure.
Be in joy,
gold friend of men,

and speak to these Geats
with kind words
as men should do.
Be gracious to the Geats
and mindful of the [gifts](#)
you have from near and far.
A man said to me
that he would have
this warrior for a son.
Herot, the bright ring hall,
is purged. Give while you can
many [rewards](#) and leave
to your kin people and land
when you must go
to learn fate's decree.
I know my nephew Hrothulf
will keep his honor
if you, king of the Danes,
leave this world earlier than he.
I know Hrothulf will remember
what we two wish
and the kindness we showed
when he was a child."

Wealhtheow turned then
to the bench where her sons
were, Hrethric and Hrothmund,
children of warriors,
the youth together.
There the good ones sat,
Beowulf of the Geats
and the two brothers.
To him the cup was carried
and friendship offered in words.
Wound gold was kindly bestowed:
two arm ornaments, shirts
of mail, rings, and the largest
neck ring I have heard
tell of on the earth.

I have not heard
of any greater hoard-treasures
under the sky since
Hama carried away
to his bright fortress
the necklace of the Brosings.

He fled a treacherous quarrel
from the king of the East Goths
with the ornament and its setting,
choosing everlasting gain.

(This is the ring Hygelac
of the Geats, grandson of Swerting,
uncle of Beowulf, would have near
when he guarded the battle-spoil
under his banner. Fate would take him
when he courted trouble--
out of pride--in a feud
with the Frisians. He would wear
those noble stones over
the cup of the waves. He would
fall beneath his shield. His body,
his armor, and the ring also, would
pass into the power of the [Franks](#).
Bad warriors rifled the corpses
after the battle slaughter.
The Geat people remained
in the field of corpses.)

Music [filled](#) the hall. Wealhtheow
spoke before the company:
"Enjoy this neck-ring,
beloved Beowulf, young hero,
and use this armor, these
treasures of the people.
Thrive well, be known
for valor, and give kind
instruction to these two boys.
I will remember your deeds.
You have earned forever
the praise of men,
from near and far,
even to the home of the winds
and the walls of the sea.
Be blessed while you live, prince!
I wish you well with the treasures.
Be gentle, joyful one, to my sons.
In this place is each warrior
true to the other, mild
in spirit, and faithful
to his king. The warriors

are united, the men drink
deep, and they do my bidding."

She went to her seat.
There was a choice feast,
men drank wine.
They did not know
that grim fate
would come to many nobles
after evening fell
and powerful Hrothgar
went to his house to rest.

Countless warriors guarded the hall,
as they had often done:
they cleared the floor of benches,
spread out beds and cushions.
One of the beer drinkers,
doomed and fated,
lay on the couch.
They set by their heads
their war gear and bright
wood shields. There on the bench
over each warrior could be seen
a towering helmet, ringed armor,
and a huge wooden spear.
Their custom was that they were
always ready for war, both
in the field and at home, each
ready anytime his king needed him.
Those were good people.

end of episode six

Part Two: Grendel's Mother **--The Attack of Grendel's Mother--**

They sank into sleep.
One paid dearly for
his evening's rest,
as had happened often
since Grendel had come
to the gold hall
performing his evil
until the end came to him,
death after his sins.

It was soon learned
and widely known among men
that an avenger yet lived
after that war-trouble:
Grendel's mother, a monster
woman, she who lived in
the terrible water,
the cold streams,
thought of her misery.

After Cain killed his brother,
his father's son,
he went in guilt,
marked by murder,
fleeing the joys of men
to occupy the waste land.
There awoke many fated spirits,
Grendel being one,
that savage, hateful outcast.
At Herot he found a man
awake and ready for war.
The monster laid hold of him,
but Beowulf kept in mind his
strength, the precious gift
God had granted, and God gave
him help and support.
Thus Beowulf overcame that enemy,
subdued that hellish demon.
Then Grendel went,
the enemy of mankind,
deprived of joy,
seeking his death place.

So his mother, greedy
and gloomy as the gallows,
went on a sorrowful journey
to avenge her son's death.

So she came to Herot where
the Danes slept in the hall.
The fortunes of the noble ones
changed when Grendel's mother
got inside: the terror was less
by just so much as
is the strength of a woman,
the war-horror of a woman,

is less than the horror of
a sword forged with hammer
and stained in blood
shearing the strong edges
of the boar on a helmet.

Hard edges were drawn in the hall,
swords off the benches,
and many broad shields fast in hand,
though they forgot about helmets
and broad mail shirts when
the terror seized them.

After they had seen her,
she was in haste
to get out of there
and save her life.
She quickly seized
one of the warriors
then headed back to the fens.
The warrior she killed,
in his sleep, was Hrothgar's
most trusted man, famous
between the two seas,
a glorious hero.

(Beowulf was not there,
for after the treasure-giving
the famous Geat had gone
to another house.)

She took her son's famous
blood-covered hand.
An outcry came from Herot,
care had been renewed
and returned to the dwelling
place--that was not a good
bargain, that both sides paid
with the lives of friends.

The wise old king,
the gray warrior,
was in a savage mood
when he heard his
chief warrior was dead.

Beowulf was quickly
fetched to the chamber.

As day broke the noble champion
together with his warriors
went to the wise ones, the hall's
wood floors resounding.
The wise ones all wondered
if ever the Almighty would
remove this woeful spell.

Beowulf asked with words
if the night had been
according to his desire
and all things agreeable.

Hrothgar, protector of the Danes, spoke:
"Don't ask about happiness!
Sorrow is renewed
among the Danish people.
Aeschere is dead, Yrmenlaf's
elder brother, my confidant,
the bearer of my advice, my
shoulder companion when troops
clash and boar helmets smashed.
As a noble prince should be,
such Aeschere was!
Now he has been slain
in Herot by the hands
of a restless, murderous spirit.
I do not know where
his carcass has gone
to be gladly feasted on.
She has avenged the feud
for your violent killing
with hard hand clasps
of Grendel yesternight
for diminishing and destroying
my people for so long.
Grendel fell in battle,
forfeited his life, and
now another has come,
a mighty man-eater
to avenge her kin,
as is seen by many
a warrior who mourns for me,

treasure giver, weeping in
their minds for my heavy
sorrow, a hand lying lifeless
who gave good things to you.
I have heard tell
among my people
and councilors that
they had seen two mighty
wanderers in the waste land
moors keeping guard,
alien spirits. One was,
as far as they could see,
the likeness of a woman.
The other miserable thing
in the stature of a man,
though he was larger
than any other man,
as they trod the paths of exiles.
In the days of old
earth dwellers called him Grendel.
We have no knowledge of a father,
of any forebears among evil spirits.
They occupied the secret land,
the wolf's retreat--
windy bluffs, perilous fens,
where a waterfall
darkens under bluffs
and goes down under the ground.
It is not far from here,
by measure of miles,
that the mere stands.
Over it hangs a frost-covered
grove, woods rooted deep-
shadowing the water.
There each night
a portent may be seen:
fire on the water.
No wise one among
the sons of men
knows the bottom.
Though the heath-stalker,
the strong-horned hart,
harassed by hounds, seeks
the forest in his flight,
he will give his life
rather than protect his head

by going there.
That is not a good place!
There water surges up,
black, to the clouds,
and the wind stirs up
hateful weather so that
the sky turns gloomy and weeps. . .
Again it has happened that
the remedy lies with you alone.
The land, the dangerous place
where you might find
this criminal is unexplored.
Seek it if you dare. . .
For that fight I will pay
as I did before with
wound gold and ancient
treasures. . .if you survive."

Beowulf, son of Ecgtheow, spoke:
"Do not sorrow, wise king!
It is better for a man
to avenge a friend
than mourn much. Each of us
must await the end of this
life. He who wishes will
work for glory before death.
That is best for the warrior
after he is gone.
Arise, guardian of the kingdom,
let us go quickly
to see Grendel's kin.
I promise you this:
she will not escape to shelter--
not into the earth's bosom,
not into the mountain's wood,
not into the sea's bottom,
go where she will!
For this day, have
patience in each woe."

The veteran leapt up then,
thanking God, the Mighty One,
that the man had so spoken.

A horse with plaited mane
was saddled for Hrothgar:

the wise king rode in splendor,
a band of men marching on foot.

Tracks were clearly visible
going over the ground
along the forest paths
where she had gone forth
over the murky moors
carrying the good warrior,
the [best](#) of men, lifeless,
a man who had helped
Hrothgar guard his home.

The noble Hrothgar passed
over narrows, lonely paths,
steep, stony slopes
on that unknown way
among steep bluffs
and the homes of water monsters.

He and the wise men
went before the rest
to scout the place,
and suddenly, he saw
a joyless woods leaning over
turbid and bloody water.
For all the Danes
it was grievous, and
the warriors suffered
when they on the sea
cliff saw Aeschere's head.
The water boiled with blood
and hot gore as the men watched.

Sometimes a horn sang out,
an eager war [song](#), but
the troop all waited, watching
along the water the kin
of snakes, strange sea dragons,
swimming in the deep or
lying on the steep slopes--
water monsters, serpents, and
wild beasts, such as the ones
that appear on a dangerous
sea journey in the morning time.
When those creatures heard

the war horn's note
they hurried away
bitter and angry.

A man from the Geat
tribe with his bow
deprived of life, of
wave battle, one
of the monsters. An
arrow, war hard, stuck
in its heart, and it
swam more weakly
as death took it.
Quickly it was attacked
in the waves with barbed
spears and swords and
dragged by force to the
bluff, a wondrous sea roamer.
Warriors examined
the terrible stranger.

Beowulf arrayed himself
in armor, not at all
worrying about his life,
putting on his mail shirt,
[large](#) and decorated,
woven by hand so that
it could protect his chest
as he tried the water,
so that hostile grips,
the fury's malicious grasps,
might not scathe his life.

A shiny helmet protected the head
that would go to the watery depths.
It was adorned with treasures,
encircled with splendid chains--
in the old days weapon-smiths
formed it wondrously, setting
on it boar figures so that
no sword could bite it in battle.

And it was not the weakest of helps
Unferth, Hrothgar's spokesman,
loaned: the hilted sword called
Hrunting, an ancient treasure

with edges of iron and adorned
with poison strips. That sword,
hardened in blood, had never failed
a man who grasped it in hand
and dared a terrible journey,
battles in a hostile place.
This would not be the first time
it had gone to do brave [work](#).
Unferth, great of strength,
did not remember what he had
said, drunk on wine, but loaned
his weapon to a better sword
warrior: he himself did not
dare [venture](#) his life
under the terrible waves
to perform a deed of valor.
There he lost his fame,
his renown for valor.

This was not so for that other man,
he who prepared himself for war.
Beowulf, son of Ecgtheow, spoke:
"Remember, Hrothgar, kin of Healfdene,
gold [friend](#) of men, wise king,
now that I am ready to start,
what we have spoken of--
if I, in your service,
lose my life, that you
will be in position of my father.
Be a protector of my warriors,
my comrades, if war takes me.
Also, beloved Hrothgar,
send the treasure you gave me
to Hygelac, king of the Geats,
that he may perceive from the gold,
beholding the treasure,
that I found a virtuous ring giver
who I enjoyed while I could.
And give Unferth my old heirloom,
my splendid wavy sword
widely known among men
to have a hard edge.
I will do my glory work
with Hrunting--or
death will take me. . ."

With these words
the chief of the Geats,
waiting for no reply,
hastened with bravery.
The surging water took
the warrior, and it was
a good part of a day
before he found the bottom.

She who had fiercely guarded,
grim and greedy, that water
for a hundred half-years
quickly saw that some man
from above was exploring
the monsters' home. Then
the enemy seized the warrior
in her horrid clutches, yet
he was not injured--the ringed
armor protected him, and she
could not break his mail shirt
with her hostile claws.

The sea wolf bore
the armored warrior
down to her dwelling
at the bottom. He could not,
despite his bravery, command
his weapons--many a sea beast
harassed him with battle tusks,
trying to cut his armor.

Then the chief found
that he was with someone
in a hostile hall.
The flood's rush
could not harm him there
because of the hall's roof.

He saw a firelight shine
in a brilliant flame.
Then the warrior saw
that monster of the deep,
the mighty mere-woman.

He swung his battle sword
quickly--he did not hold

back--and the ringed blade
sang a greedy war song
on her head. But the guest
found that the flashing
sword would not bite,
could not harm her life--
the edge failed him at need.
(It had endured many
combats, often slashed helmets
and fated war garments. . .
This was the first time
that precious treasure
failed in its glory.)

But Beowulf was resolute,
by no means slow in valor,
still thinking of daring deeds.
The angry warrior threw
the carved sword covered
in ornaments, stiff and edged
in iron, to the floor
and trusted in his powerful
hand grip. (So must a man do
when he wishes for enduring
fame at war: he cannot
The lord of the Geats
did not grieve at the battle
but seized Grendel's mother
by the shoulder.
Now he was enraged
and flung his deadly foe
to the ground.

She paid him back quickly
with angry claws and
clutched him against her.
At that moment
the strongest of warriors
felt sick at heart:
he fell. She sat
on her hall guest
and drew a dagger,
wide and brown-edged--
she would avenge her son,
her only offspring.

On his shoulder lay
the woven mail shirt.
It protected his life,
withstood the entrance
of point and edge.
Beowulf, son of Ecgtheow,
champion of the Geats,
would have perished then
under the wide ground
had not his armor,
his hard war net, helped
him (and Holy God, who
brought about war victory).

The wise ruler of the skies
decided justice easily when
Beowulf stood up again:
there among the weapons
he saw a victory-blessed sword,
an old sword made by giants
with strong edges, the glory
of warriors. It was
the choicest of weapons,
good and majestic,
the work of giants, but
larger than any other man
could carry to battle sport.

He who fought for the Danes,
fierce and sword grim,
despairing of life,
seized the chain-wound hilt,
drew the ringed sword,
and angrily struck--
It grasped her neck hard
and her bone rings broke.
The blade entered
the fated body.
She fell to the ground.
The sword was bloody,
and the warrior rejoiced
in his work.

Suddenly light glittered,
a light brightened within,
as bright and clear as

the candle of the sky.
He looked around the building,
walked around the walls.
He raised the weapon
hard by its hilt--
Beowulf was angry and resolute.
The edge was not useless
to the warrior--he wished
to requite Grendel for
the many attacks he
had made on the Danes,
much more often
than on one occasion,
when he had slain
Hrothgar's guests in their sleep.
Fifteen Danish men
he devoured while they slept,
and carried as many away,
hideous booty. The fierce
champion paid him his reward:
Beowulf saw Grendel in rest,
worn out with fighting,
lifeless from the hard wounds
he had gotten in battle
at Herot. The corpse
split when it suffered
that blow after death--
the hard sword stroke.
Beowulf cut off the head.

The wise men with Hrothgar
saw the surging water mingled
with blood. The old gray-hairs
spoke together, saying
they did not expect the famous
prince to be victorious.
To many it seemed the sea wolf
had destroyed him.
Then came noon of the day
and the valiant Danes left
the bluff. The king went
home. His guests sat down
sick at heart
and stared at the mere.
They wished, but did not hope,

that they would see
their dear lord again.

Back in the Cave

The sword, because of the blood,
began to fade--a battle icicle.
That was some wonder:
it all melted,
just like ice
when the Father--
who has power
over times and seasons--
loosens the bands
and unwinds the wave [ropes](#).
(That is the True Maker.)

The leader of the Geats
took no more treasures
from the dwelling,
though he saw many,
except for the head
and the hilt decorated
with treasure. The blade
had melted. . .the
ornamented sword burned up--
so hot was the blood,
so poisonous the alien
spirit who died there.

Soon he was swimming;
his enemy had fallen in fight.
He swam up through the water--
the surging waters were purged,
all the broad expanse,
when the alien spirit
gave up her life days
on this loaned world.

Beowulf Comes Up

Came then to the land
the chief of the sailors,
boldly swimming. He rejoiced
in the sea-booty,

the mighty burden of things
he had with him.

His men rushed toward him,
thanking God they saw him
[safe](#). The helmet and armor
were quickly loosed from
the strong man. The lake
grew calm, the water under
the clouds, stained with blood.
They went from there
on the forest paths
glad in mind.

The brave men measured
the well-known road
bearing the head
from the lake cliff
with difficulty--
it took four men
to bear the spear shaft
with Grendel's head
to the gold hall.

The fourteen brave
war-like Geats marched
straight to the hall
with the lord of men
proud among them.

He crossed the meadow,
then came inside,
the prince of warriors,
the man of daring deeds,
honored with glory,
a hero in battle,
to greet Hrothgar.

They carried Grendel's head
by its hair onto the floor
where the men were drinking--
a terrible sight before
the warriors and the women
with them, a wondrous sight.
The men looked at it.

Beowulf, son of Ecgtheow, spoke:
"Behold, son of Healfdene,
Lord of the Danes--we have brought
you with pleasure this sea booty,
as token of glory,
which you see here.
I hardly survived
the battle under the water,
engaged in that deed
with difficulty. The battle
would have ended quickly
if God had not protected me.
Nor could I accomplish anything
with Hrunting, that strong
weapon, but the ruler of men
granted me to see
a beautiful old mighty sword
hanging on the wall.
He often guides a man
devoid of friends.
I drew that weapon,
cut in that conflict
the [house](#) guardians
when I saw the chance.
That ornamented sword burned
up as the blood sprang.
I carried the hilt away
from the enemies.
The deeds of [crime](#),
the slaughter of the Danes,
has been avenged
as it was right to do.
I promise you
that you and your warriors
may sleep in Herot
[free](#) from care
and every warrior
of your tribe,
old men and young--
you need not,
Prince of the Danes,
fear for them,
death of your warriors
from that side
as you did before."

Then was the golden hilt,
the ancient [work](#) of giants,
given to the hand
of the aged warrior,
the gray war leader.
The possession of it,
the wondrous work of smiths,
passed, after the deaths
of demons, to the king of the Danes.
When the grim-hearted being,
God's adversary, guilty of murder,
left this world,
and his mother also,
the hilt passed
into the power of the [best](#)
of the world's kings
between the seas
who dealt out treasure
in the Northland.

Hrothgar examined the hilt,
the old heirloom,
on which was written
in ancient runes
the story of the flood
which with rushing sea
slew the race of giants
with terrible suffering.
That was a race foreign
to the Eternal Lord.
The Almighty gave them
a final reward through
the water's surging.

Also on the sword guard
bright with gold
was rightly written--
in rune letters,
set and said--
for whom the sword
had been wrought,
this choicest of iron
with twisted hilt
and snake ornaments.

Hrothgar Expounds On How To Be A Good Warrior

Then the wise one,
son of Healfdene, spoke
(all were silent):
"Lo, this he may say
who does truth and right
among the people,
remembers things far distant,
an old guardian:
This is the best-born man!
My friend Beowulf,
your renown is established
beyond the wide ways,
yours over all the nations.
Hold it steady,
might with mind's wisdom.
I shall carry out
my friendship as
we two spoke before.
You shall prove
a long-lasting relief
to your people,
a help to fighters.
Heremod was not so
to the offspring of Ecgwela,
the honorable Danes.
He waxed not to their help
but to their slaughter,
for the destruction
of the Danish people.
Enraged, he cut down
his table companions,
his bosom friends,
until he went about alone,
away from the joy of life
among men, a notorious
prince, although Almighty God
had raised his strength,
advanced it over all men.
His spirit, his heart,
grew blood thirsty.
He gave no rings
to Danes who pursued glory.
Joyless he went on,

struggling on as a long-lasting
affliction. Learn from this
and understand manly virtues.
I, old and wise in winters,
tell you this
for your sake.
It is wonderful to say
how mighty God through
His wisdom and large heart
distributes land and rank
to the race of men.
He controls all.
Sometimes out of love
He gives a man wisdom,
great among his kin,
gives him a home,
the joy of the earth,
gives him control
of a fortress of men,
a wide kingdom in the world,
so that the man
in his un-wisdom
does not think about the end.
He lives in plenty;
neither disease nor age
live with him;
his mind is not darkened
with evil worries,
nor does enmity
bring about war.
All the world
turns to his will--
he does not know worse--
but then arrogance grows;
the guardian of his soul
sleeps. That sleep is
too heavy, bound with affliction,
and the killer very near
who shoots his bow
with evil intent.
Then he is hit
in the heart,
beneath his armor,
with a bitter arrow--
he cannot guard himself
against the perverse commands

of his accursed spirit.
Then what he has long held
seems too little; angry-minded,
he covets, never proudly giving
gold rings, and he forgets
and neglects the future
state because God the Ruler
of Glory has given him
a great deal of honors.
In the end it comes to pass
that the body, on loan,
declines, falls fated. Another,
who recklessly dispenses
treasure, one who does not
hold it in terror, seizes
the warrior's ancient possessions.
Beloved Beowulf, best of warriors,
protect yourself against that
wickedness and choose better,
eternal councils. Do not heed
arrogance, famous champion!
Now is your strength famous. . .
for awhile. Soon after
it shall happen that disease,
or the sword's edge, shall
cut off your strength.
Or maybe the fire's embrace,
or the flood's welling,
or the grip of the sword,
or the arrow's flight,
or dire age. . . Bright eyes
do diminish and go dark.
Straightway death will overpower you,
warrior.
Thus I have ruled under the clouds
the prosperous Danes a hundred half-
years,
and by war have protected them
against many nations
throughout this middle earth
with spears and edges,
so that under heaven's expanse
I could think of no enemies.
Lo, a reverse came to me--
in my home--sadness after joy
when the old adversary Grendel

invaded. I have continually
carried worry over that visitation.
Therefore, thanks to the Creator,
the Eternal Lord, that I have
remained in life to gaze with
my eyes at the blood-stained head
after that old contention!
Go now to your seat,
feast in joy, you who are
distinguished in battle.
We shall share
a great many treasures
before morning comes."

The Geat was glad in mind,
quickly seeking his seat
as the wise one bade.
Then again was the feast
prepared, as before, for
the courageous ones sitting
in the hall.

The helmet of night turned black,
dark over the warriors.
The men all arose.
The gray-haired one
would seek his bed,
the old Dane.

It pleased the Geat well,
the strong shield warrior,
that he should have rest.
A hall warrior guided
the man who was far from home,
tending to every courtesy, every
need of the warrior. Such
in those days could
a sea-fairer expect.
The great-hearted one then rested.
The hall reached high,
vaulted and adorned in gold.
The guest rested within
until the black raven
told heaven's joy
with a happy heart.
Then came the bright light,

hastening over the shadow.

The warriors hurried,
eager to go back
to their people.
The bold of spirit sought his ship.

Later it happened,
after Hygelac fell
in the storm of war,
and his son, Heardred,
fell too under his shield,
killed by the sword
fighting the Swedes,
that the broad kingdom
came into Beowulf's hand.

He held it well, ruled
fifty winters; he was
an old land guardian.
Then in the dark nights
a dragon began to rule,
he who guarded a hoard,
a steep stone burial mound
high on the heath.

A path led underneath
unknown to men.
But a certain man
stumbled on it,
into the heathen hoard,
and took a cup,
a [large](#), decorated treasure.
The dragon did not hide
his opinion of that deed;
the neighboring people
quickly learned his anger.

But the thief did not
of his own accord
plunder the treasure:
he was driven by need,
a fugitive from [justice](#).
Fleeing hostile blows
and in need of a roof,
he stumbled in,

a man distressed.
He was amazed at what
he saw--a precious
hoard, cups and weapons.
There were many such
ancient treasures in
that earth [house](#), for
in the old days a man
had hidden the riches
of a noble, dying tribe there.
He was the last; death
had taken the rest.

That lone survivor, knowing
death was near, mourning
his lost friends, kept
those treasures all alone.
The cave stood near the sea,
protected by secret spells.
He bore the treasures inside,
a huge and worthy hoard
of worked gold. He said,
"Hold you now, Earth, what
warriors could not. Lo,
from you first it was taken.
War-Death has seized my people;
none of them can bear a sword,
hold an ornamented cup. They
have gone elsewhere. Now shall
the hard helmet and its golden
ornaments fall. Their owners
sleep in death, those who
once wore the war-mask. So
it is with the coat of mail,
which stood amid crashing shields,
held off the bite of iron:
it lies, falling to pieces,
like the warrior who owned it.
Never again will that armor
travel far on a war chief
by the side of heroes.
There is no joy in the song,
no pleasure in the [harp](#).
No hawk sweeps over the hall.
No horse [gallops](#) in the courtyard.
Death has sent off many men."

Thus, sad in mind,
he moaned his sorrow;
the [lonely](#) survivor moved
day and night in sadness
until the flood of death
surged into his heart.

The Dragon Attacks

An old night-ravager,
that one which, burning,
seeks a burial mound,
the smooth dragon of malice
who flies by night
encompassed in fire,
found the hoard
standing open.

Earth dwellers fear him much.
He must seek a hoard
in the earth, where,
old in winters, he
will guard heathen
gold, though he gains
nothing from it.

So that foe of the people,
exceedingly powerful,
guarded the cave
three hundred winters
until a man
angered his heart,
took a cup
to his master
asking for peace.
Peace was granted:
the lord examined
the cup, the ancient
[work](#) of men.
So was the hoard robbed,
ransacked of a treasure.

The dragon awoke,
and strife came: it
sniffed along the stones,
found an intruder's footprints.

The thief had stepped
with insidious craft
near the dragon's head.
(Thus may an undoomed man
survive danger
if the Almighty
holds him in favor.)

The hoard-keeper sought
eagerly along the ground,
looked for the man
who had robbed him
while he slept.
Hot and fierce he moved
about the cave. He
went completely around
the wasted place but
no man was there.
Eager for battle, he
turned and turned again
searching the cave,
but the golden cup was gone.

Anxiously he awaited
the fall of night;
enraged, the cave-keeper
would with fire avenge
the loss of his cup.
When the day was gone,
as the dragon wanted,
he no longer waited,
but went in flame,
prepared with fire.

The beginning was fearful
to people in the land,
as was the ending:
death for their king.
The fiend spouted fire,
burned bright houses--
the glow of fire stood out,
a horror to the people.
That terrible sky-flier
wished to leave
nothing alive.

Near and far was seen
the dragon's violence,
how that destroyer
hated and humbled the Geat
people. The people of the land
were enveloped in fire.
At dawn he darted
back into his cave.
He trusted in his war
and in his cavern.

But trust was to play him false.
Beowulf learned the terror
quickly, in truth:
the surging fires
burned his house,
the mead hall of the Geats.
That was sorrow
to the good man,
the greatest of sorrows:
the wise king feared
he'd enraged God,
broken a commandment.
His heart surged
with gloomy thoughts,
which was not
his usual way.
The flame-dragon had burned
the fortress of the people.
The war-king studied revenge.

That prince ordered
an iron shield:
he knew for a fact
that the best wood,
the very best linden,
couldn't [help](#)
against flame.

The good prince awaited
the last of his days,
the end of this world's life,
and the dragon with him,
no matter how long
he'd held the treasure.

Beowulf scorned a host,
a large [army](#),
when he sought the dragon;
he didn't fear
the dragon's [war](#);
he trusted his strength
and courage since he had
survived many battles,
the flashings of battle gleams,
since the time he'd cleared
Hrothgar's wine-hall
of Grendel's family,
that hateful race.

Nor was it a small battle
when the Geat king,
that lord of the folk,
Hygelac, attacked Fresland
and died there
of sword drinks,
beaten down by weapons.
Yet from that place Beowulf
came, down to the sea,
with thirty suits of battle
in his arms, and in his strength
was able to swim.

The Hetware had no cause
for joy among their soldiers--
few of those
who carried shields
left that battle
to seek their homes.
Beowulf swam the wide water,
wretched, solitary,
[back](#) to his people.
There Hygd, Hygelac's wife,
offered him treasure
and the kingdom,
rings and the throne,
because she did not
trust her son to keep them
from foreign armies.

But Beowulf would not
for any reason be

lord over his king's son,
so he protected the boy,
gave him good council
till Heardred became a man.
Banished men sought
Heardred over the sea,
sons of Othere,
king of the Swedes;
they had rebelled
against their lord,
the best of sea-kings.

That was Heardred's death-sentence,
the son of Hygelac:
for entertaining those men
he died of sword strokes.
Then Ongentheow's son
left for home, and Beowulf
held the gift seat,
ruled over the Geats.
He was a good king.
He avenged Heardred's death
in later days,
became to the wretched Eadgils
a friend, supported
that son of Ohthere
over the wide sea
with men and weapons.
On a cold expedition he
deprived king Onela of life.
Thus had that son of Ecgtheow
survived each battle, terrible
war, much courage-work,
until the day when
he fought the dragon.

Beowulf Visits the Dragon

Twelve enraged men
paid the dragon a visit.
The king had by then
learned how the feud arose,
this affliction of men:
to his possession had come,
through the hand of an informer,
the precious cup.

The thief, the cause of this
strife, made thirteen, a saddened
captive, abjectly showing the way.
He went against his will
to that earth-hall,
the one he'd found
near the surging sea,
by the tossing water.

The inside was full
of works of art.
The awful keeper,
alert fighter,
held those gold treasures,
old under [the earth](#);
no man would buy them [cheap](#).

The brave king,
gold-friend of the Geats,
sat down on the headland
and talked with his companions.
He was sad, restless,
and ready to die.
That fate was near
which the old man
would greet.
He would seek his reward,
life from body parted;
not for long
would the soul of the prince
stay wrapped in flesh.

Beowulf spoke:
"Often in youth
I survived
the storm of battle,
the time of war.
I remember all that.
I was seven winters old
when my father took me
to the king of the people.
Hrethel gave me treasure
and feasting, remembering kinship.
I wasn't more hateful
to him than any son
in his house--

than one of his children--
Herebeald, Haethcyn, or my Hygelac.
The eldest was,
by a kinsman's deed,
strewn on the bed of death--
Haethcyn struck his lord
and brother with the arrow
from a bow: missed the mark
and killed his kinsman
with a bloody arrow.
That was a feud that
couldn't be fought.
Weary it is to the heart:
That prince lost his life
. . .unavenged.
That felt just as it does
for an old man to await
the swinging of his son
on the gallows.
He sings a mournful song
when his son hangs
a feast to ravens
and, though old and wise,
he cannot help.
Every morning calls to mind
the journey of his son
to elsewhere--the father
cares not to wait
for the other heirs
when he has, through
an unavoidable death,
experienced an evil.
Sorrow is in the home,
the wine-hall abandoned,
bereft of joy.
The riders sleep,
warriors in the grave;
there is no harp song,
no joy in the court.
Not as there once was.
Comes then from the bedstead
a song of sorrow.
The house and fields
seem too large."

So Beowulf spoke
of his sorrow
for Herebeald.
He could not
for that murder
seek revenge,
though the doer
was not dear to him.

"When that sorrow befell Hrethal
he gave up the joys of men
and chose God's light.
He left to his offspring
a land and a people.
Then were accusations
across the water,
severe hostility
from the war-like sons
of Ongentheow. They would
have nothing of friendship,
but around Hreosnaburg
planned a terrible slaughter.
My kinsmen avenged that,
the feud and crime,
as is well known,
though one paid with his life,
a hard bargain:
for Haethcyn the battle was fatal.
And I've heard tell
how another kinsman
attacked his slayer
with sword's edge;
When Ongentheow sought Eofor
he found his helmet split,
fell down, battle pale.
I repaid Hygelac
for the favors he'd shown,
lands and a house,
with my bright sword.
(He needn't look
for a worse man).
I went alone in the front,
and will so ever,
as long as this sword lasts
which has served me so well.
I was the killer of Daghrefin,

the Huga champion.
He brought no treasures
back from the battle
to the Frisian king
but died in the fight,
that banner guardian,
a prince in bravery.
Nor was my sword his death,
but my hand grasp
broke his bone-house,
tore out his surging heart.
Now shall the sword's edge,
hands and hard sword,
fight over this hoard."

Then Beowulf made his last boast:
"I ventured many battles
in my youth; now, old,
I will seek another,
try again for glorious
deeds, if that avenger
will come out."

He spoke to each
of his brave companions
for the last time:
"I would not use a sword
against this monster
if I might otherwise fight,
as I did with Grendel.
But how else fight fire?
a breath of poison?
Therefore I wear shield and mail.
I will not back
a step away
from that hoard-guardian.
We two shall end
as fate decrees.
I am brave in mind,
so I go against the war-flyer
in no need
of further boasting.
You men wait on the hill,
protect the war-gear
and see which will,
after the death rush,

come away unwounded.
This is not your duty,
nor in the power of man.
No one but myself
can fight this monster.
Your lord shall either
win the treasure
or lose his life."

The brave in battle arose then,
bore his shield and mail,
trusting his strength
under the stone cliffs.
(This is not the coward's way).

He saw by the cave,
he who had many virtues,
he who had survived many times
the battle flashes
when troops rush together,
a stream running
from the stone arch--
a stream of fire.

He could not enter
for the dragon's flame.
Beowulf was angry,
the lord of the Geats,
he who stormed in battle.
He yelled into the cave.

The hoard-keeper perceived
a man's voice and
didn't plan to ask
for friendship.
Flames shot out
from among the stones,
hot battle-sweat.
The ground dinned.

The hero raised his shield
against the dreadful stranger.
Then the coiled thing
sought battle.
The war king drew his sword,
an ancient heirloom

with edges unblunt.
Each of them intended
horror to the other.

Stouthearted stood that war-prince
with his shield upraised,
waited in his war-gear.
The dragon coiled together,
went forth burning,
gliding toward his fate.

His shield protected
life and body
for a shorter time
than the prince had hoped.
That was the first day
he was not granted
glory in battle.
The lord of the Geats
raised his arm,
struck the horrible thing
with his ancestral sword,
but the edge gave way:
that bright sword
bit less on the bone
than the war-king needed.

After that [stroke](#)
the cave-guardian
was in a [savage](#) mood.
He threw death-fire--
widely sprayed
battle flashes.
The gold-friend of the Geats
wasn't boasting of victory.
His war-sword had failed,
not bitten home
as it should have,
that iron which had
always been trustworthy.
This wasn't a pleasant trip:
that famous king, Beowulf,
would have to leave this earth,
would have, against his will,
to move elsewhere.
(So must every man

give up
these transitory days.)

It wasn't long before
the terrible ones
met again--
The hoard-keeper took heart,
heaved his fire [anew](#).
He who once ruled a nation
was encircled by fire;
no troop of friends,
strong princes,
stood around him:
they ran to the woods
to save their lives.

Yet in one of them
welled a sorrowful heart.
That true-minded one
didn't forget kinship.
Wiglaf he was called,
the son of Weohstan,
a beloved shield-warrior,
a lord of the Scylfings,
a kinsman of Aelthere.
He saw his lord
suffering from heat
under his helmet.
He remembered the [gifts](#),
a [rich](#) home among
the Waegmundings,
the rich [inheritance](#),
that his father had had.

Wiglaf could not refrain,
but grabbed his shield,
drew his ancient sword
that among men was known
as the heirloom of Eanmund,
the son of Othere.
(Eanmund, after a quarrel,
was killed by Weohstan
with the sword's edge.
Weohstan became
a friendless exile.
To Eanmund's own kinsmen

he [bore](#) the burnished helmet,
the ring-locked mail,
the old sword made by giants.
Onela had given Eanmund that,
the war-equipment,
and did not mention
the feud, though his
brother's child was killed.
Weohstan held the treasure
many years,
the sword and mail,
until his son could
do heroic deeds
as his father had done.
He gave the war-dress to Wiglaf
and a great many treasures,
then departed this earth
old on his journey.
But this was the first time
the young [champion](#)
had gone into the war-storm.)

His spirit did not fail,
nor his heirloom: that
the dragon discovered
when they met in battle.

Wiglaf spoke words about duty,
said in sorrow to his companions:
"I remember the times
we drank mead and how
we promised our lord
there in the beer-hall,
he who gave us gifts,
that we would repay
all his largess,
the helmets and hard swords,
if the need
should ever befall.
He chose his best men
for this expedition,
gave us honor and
these treasures because
he considered us best
among spear fighters,
though he proposed to

do the job alone because
he had performed the most
famous deeds among men.
Now has the day come
that our lord
is in need of fighters,
of good warriors.
Let us go to him,
help the war-chief
in this fire-horror.
God knows, to me,
my lord means more
than my skin.
With him I will
embrace the fire.
It isn't proper
that we bare shields
back to our homes
before we can
defend our lord
and kill the enemy.
He doesn't deserve
to suffer alone.
We two shall share
the sword and helmet,
the mail and war-garment."

Then Wiglaf advanced
through the death-fumes,
wore his helmet
to help his lord.

He spoke these words:
"Dear Beowulf, may you
accomplish all well,
as you did in youth,
as I have heard tell.
Don't surrender the glory
of your life. Defend now,
with all your strength,
your brave deeds.
I will help."

After these words
the dragon angrily came;
the terrible spirit

another time attacked
with surging fire.
Fire waves burned
Wiglaf's shield
down to the handle,
his mail could not
protect the young
spear-warrior.
He ducked behind
his kinsman's shield.

Then the war-king
remembered past deeds,
struck mightily with his sword
so that it stuck
in the dragon's head;
Naegling, the great sword of Beowulf,
ancient and shining,
broke, failed in battle.
Fate had not granted that
the iron sword would help.

(I've heard that Beowulf's
swing was too strong
for any sword,
overstrained any blade,
anytime he carried
a blood-hardened sword
into battle.)

Then the terrible dragon
a third time rushed,
hot and battle-grim.
He bit Beowulf's neck
with sharp tusks--Beowulf
was wet with life's blood;
blood gushed in waves.

Then, I've heard,
Wiglaf showed courage,
craft and bravery,
as was his nature--he went
not for the thought-seat,
but struck a little lower,
helped his kinsman
though his hand was burned.

The sword, shining
and ornamented,
drove in so that
the fire abated.

Then the king controlled
his senses, drew his
battle knife, bitter
and battle sharp, which
he carried on his mail,
and cut the dragon
through the middle.
The enemy fell--strength
had driven out life;
the two kinsmen, together,
had cut down the enemy.
So should a warrior do.

That was Beowulf's last victory;
his last work in this world.

The wound began
to swell and burn,
the venom seethed,
that poison inside.
The prince went
to sit by the wall,
the wise man sat down
to look at the work
of giants held within
the earth-house standing
on stone pillars.

Wiglaf bathed him,
his lord,
wearied in battle,
and unfastened his helmet.

Beowulf spoke,
despite his wounds.
(He knew well
he'd seen the last
of this world's joys,
that he'd numbered
his last day.)
"Now should I give my sons

my battle garments,
but fate did not [grant](#)
that I have sons.
I ruled the people
fifty [winters](#).
Not one king among
the neighboring peoples
dared greet me
with a sword;
I feared no one.
I awaited my destiny well:
never did I plot a quarrel,
never did I swear
an unjust oath.
I take joy in this,
despite a mortal wound.
The Ruler of Mankind
will not charge
that I murdered a kinsman
when my life
departs this body.
Go quickly, Wiglaf,
examine the hoard
under the gray stone
now that the dragon lies
sleeping of a wound,
bereft of his treasure.
Be in haste
so that I may see
the ancient treasure,
may examine
the curious gems,
so that I may
more cheerfully give up
my life and country."

Wiglaf hurried
from his wounded lord,
obeyed the battle-sick one,
rushed in his mail
under the cave's roof.
There by a seat
the brave young man saw
many precious jewels,
shining gold on the ground,
and works of art

on the walls.
There in the dragon's den
Wiglaf saw the cups
of ancient men,
ornaments fallen.
There were helmets,
old and rusty,
and many arm-rings
twisted with skill.
(Treasure, gold in
the ground, may be easily
seized by any man,
hide it who will.)

Wiglaf saw a standard
all golden high
over the treasure,
the greatest of hand-wonders,
woven with the skill of hands.
From it a light shone,
lit all the ground
so he could look
over all the treasures.
Then, I have heard,
he rifled the hoard and
into his bosom loaded
the ancient work of giants--
goblets and dishes,
whatever he chose,
even the golden standard.
The sword, the iron edge,
had carried off
the guardian who
for a long while
carried surging fire
in the middle of the sky.

Wiglaf was in haste,
eager to return
with these great treasures;
he feared the great spirit
might be dead
in the place where he lay.
With the treasure
in his hands
he found his lord

bloody and weak.
He bathed Beowulf
until he could speak,
until words broke
from his breast-hoard.

The king, aged in sorrow,
beheld the gold and spoke:
"I thank the Wonder-King,
the Ruler of All,
that I could [win](#) this
for my people
before my death-day.
I have traded
my old life for
the people's needs.
I cannot remain.
Bid my warriors
raise a splendid mound
on the shore-cliffs
after my funeral fire
that a remembrance shall
tower high on Hronesness.
Sea-farers shall afterward
call it Beowulf's Mound
when they pilot ships
far over the ocean's mists."

He unfastened from his neck,
his golden necklace, gave it
to the brave young warrior,
and a gold-trimmed helmet,
a ring, and mail.
He bid him use them well.
"You are the last
remnant of our kin,
of the Waegmundings.
Fate has swept
the rest away,
those courageous warriors.
I follow them."

Those were the aged king's
last words, thoughts from
the heart, before he tasted
the funeral-fire,

that hot, hostile flame.
His heart departed, his soul,
to seek glory.

Wiglaf Speaks to the Cowards

The young man looked
on his beloved lord,
wretchedly killed,
lying on the ground.
His killer, the terrible
cave-dragon, also lay
bereft of life, overwhelmed
in destruction.

The dragon no longer
coiled round the hoard,
but was taken by iron,
hacked in battle
by the hammer's creation.
He had fallen
on the ground
near his treasure house.
No longer would he circle
at midnight
proud in his flames;
he had fallen
before the prince's
hand-work.

As far as I have heard
no man ever prospered
rushing against that enemy;
no man ever prospered
who found that dragon awake.
Beowulf bought the treasures
with his life.
Both of them found
the end of this life.

Soon the cowards,
the ten warriors,
returned from the woods,
those who did not dare
fight with spears
when their lord
needed help.

They carried their shields,
wore their mail,
in shame
to where Wiglaf sat,
near his lord's shoulder
trying to wake him
with water.
He did not succeed--
he could not,
though he much wished it,
hold his chief in life.
He could not change
the will of God.

The young man
gave a grim welcome
to those who had
lost courage. Wiglaf spoke,
glaring at the hated ones:
"Lo, this will he say
who wishes to speak the truth:
that lord of men
gave you treasures,
the war-equipment
you stand in.
At the ale-bench
he often gave you. . .
hall-sitters. . .
helmets and armor,
the most splendid
he could find,
far or near.
He completely
wasted that armor.
When war came
he couldn't boast
of warriors.
Still, God granted
victory to him
that he alone avenged
himself with sword
when he needed help.
I could do little in battle,
though I undertook it.
It was beyond my measure.
But I struck the foe

and fire gushed less
strongly from his head.
There were too few men
around the prince
when he faced
his time of need.
Now shall the treasure,
the sword gifts
and delightful homes
given to your people,
cease. You will lose
your land rights
when men far and wide
hear of your flight,
your shameful doings.
Death is better
to any man
than a life of disgrace."

He commanded then
that the battle-deeds
be announced
to those in town,
up over the cliff-side
where the other warriors
the whole morning
had waited,
sad in heart,
for their lord's return
or news of his death.

The Messenger Tells of Beowulf's Death and of the Feud Which Will Now Be Renewed

The messenger was not silent
but said truly
to all who heard:
"Now is the joy-giver
of the Geat people
still on his death-bed,
his slaughter-couch,
through the deeds
of the dragon.
Beside him lies
his life-enemy, sick

from a dagger wound.
His sword could not
in any way
wound the monster.
Wiglaf, son of Weohstan,
sits by Beowulf, one
warrior by another,
in the death-watch.
Now may the people
expect a time of war
when the Franks and Frisians
learn of our king's fall.
A hard quarrel was made
with the Hugas
when Hygelac went
traveling in ships
to the land of the Frisians,
attacked the Hetware.
With a larger army they
brought down that warrior;
he fell among his troops.
He gave no gifts
to his warriors.
Since then the Mereovingians
have given us no kindness.
Nor do I expect
kindness from the Swedes--
it is widely known
that Haethcyn, son of Hrethel,
wounded Ongentheow
near Ravenswood
when the Geats
arrogantly sought
war against the Swedes.
Quickly Ongentheow,
old and terrible,
gave a counterblow,
cut down Haethcyn
and rescued his wife,
that aged woman,
bereft of her gold,
the mother of Onela and Ohthere.
Ongentheow pursued
his enemies--
lordless they escaped
into Ravenswood,

and those survivors,
weary with wounds,
were besieged
by a huge army.
Often through the night
that wretched band
heard threats,
how in the morning
he would,
with the sword,
cut them open,
or hang them from trees,
a sport for birds.
Help came to them
with the early dawn
when Hygelac
sounded his trumpet,
came up the road
with picked warriors.
The bloody tracks were widely
seen, the bloody feud
between Geats and Swedes.
Ongentheow was forced
to seek higher ground,
the old man
with his kinsmen--
he quickly learned
of Hygelac's war,
did not believe
he could not withstand
the war of the sailors.
The old man retreated
with his children and wife
behind an earth-wall.
Hygelac attacked the refuge,
overran the enclosure.
There was Ongentheow,
gray-haired, brought to bay
with the edges of swords.
He was forced to submit
to the judgement of Eofor.
Wulf hit him angrily,
struck him with sword
so that blood sprang
out of his veins,
out under his hair.

But that old man
was not daunted--
he quickly repaid
that blow with a harder,
nor could Wulf
return the blow,
for Ongentheow had
sheared his helmet
so that Wulf bowed
to the earth,
covered with blood.
(He was hurt, though not yet doomed.)
As his brother lay,
Eofor, with his broad sword,
an ancient sword
made by giants,
broke Ongentheow's helmet.
That king, shepherd of his people,
bowed, mortally wounded.
Wulf was bound up. They
controlled the slaughter-place.
One warrior plundered another.
They took from Ongentheow
his iron mail,
his hard sword,
and his helmet also.
They carried
the old man's armor
to Hygelac.
He received these weapons
and promised treasures
to his people,
which he fulfilled,
paying Wulf and Eofor
for the storm of battle--
gave them both
land and treasures.
Nor should any man
throughout this world
reproach those gifts--
they were earned in war.
And to Eofor
Hygelac gave
his only daughter
as a pledge
of friendship.

That is the feud,
the deadly hostility
for which I expect
the Swedes will attack
when they learn our lord
who long protected
over hoard and kingdom,
is dead.

That most valiant of warriors
will no longer look after
the needs of our people,
will do no more
heroic deeds.

Now should we hurry
to see our king
and bring him back
to a funeral pyre.

Not a little will melt
with that bold man,
but a huge treasure,
countless wealth,
bought with grimness
by that brave man.

All that the flames will eat,
the fire embrace;
no warrior will carry
any of it as a token,
no beautiful woman
will wear a neck-ring,
but, bereft of gold
they shall walk
in a foreign country
now that our lord has forgotten
laughter and joy.

Now shall the spear be
raised, clasped in hands,
many a cold morning;
now no sound of harp
shall wake the warrior,
but the voice
of the dark raven,
eager over the doomed,
speaking to the eagle
of how the meals are,
how he rifles corpses
beside the wolf."

Thus the valiant warrior
spoke grievous words.
And he was not much wrong.

The Funeral

The sad troops rose,
went in tears
below Earnaness
to view the wonder.
Lifeless on the sand,
held in his rest-bed,
was the man who had
given them treasures.
That was the last day
of the prince of the Geats;
he died a wondrous death.

There too on the ground
was the strange thing,
the hateful dead dragon,
the fire-thrower,
in his horrible colors,
scorched by flames.
He measured fifty feet,
he who had
joyed in the sky,
flown at night,
then hidden in his lair.
But he'd made his last
use of caverns--
death held him fast.

Beside him lay
cups and pitchers,
dishes and swords
eaten through with rust
as if the earth had embraced
them a thousand winters.
That was a hoard
of great power,
that gold
ancient men
had encircled with a spell
so that no man
could touch it,

unless God himself,
the great Truth-King,
gave leave
to whichever man
seemed fit to Him.
But it was plain
that nothing had gone well
for him who had,
unrightly, hidden those
works of art
under that roof.

It's a mystery where
a good man goes
when he reaches his end,
when he can no longer
live in the houses of men.
So it was with Beowulf
after he'd sought
the keeper of the cave.
He himself couldn't know
how he would leave the world.
The famous kings who had cursed
that treasure deeply
damned him who plundered it
into eternal heathen shrines,
the solid bond of Hell.
But Beowulf did not
look on it in greed.

Wiglaf spoke, Weohstan's son:
"Often must a warrior
suffer for another's mistake,
as has happened here.
Nor could we convince
our beloved prince
that he should not attack
that gold-keeper
but let him lie
alone in his cave
until the world's end.
He grasped
his high fate--
the hoard is open,
grimly bought.
That fate

was too cruel
to which our king
was impelled.
I went inside,
saw all the treasure,
the precious things;
I didn't enter
in a friendly way.
I hastily grasped
many things in my hands,
carried out many
of the hoarded treasures
to my lord.
He was alive still,
sound in mind;
that aged man
sorrowfully said
many things:
He wanted you to build
on the site of his pyre
a high mound,
great and glorious,
since he was
among warriors
the most magnificent,
famous throughout the world.
We should now hasten
to see the curious gems,
the wonders under the earth.
I will show you the way.
Make the pyre ready
so that we may bring our lord
to the place
he will abide
in the keeping
of the All-Powerful."

Wiglaf ordered
the brave warriors
to carry wood
from far and wide
to the funeral pyre
for the great leader
of the people.

"Now shall fire eat,

the flourishing dark flames,
the ruler of warriors,
he who often braved
the rain of iron,
the storming of arrows
hard from bows,
the sturdy shaft
swift on feathered wings."

Wiglaf called seven warriors,
the very best,
and made the eighth himself,
to go under
that evil roof.
One carried a torch.
No man needed forcing
when he saw that great treasure
rusting without guardian.
None mourned
carrying that off,
and they shoved the dragon
over the cliff--
the waves embraced
that treasure guardian.

Then the twisted gold,
treasure uncountable,
was lain in a wagon;
they carried the gray warrior
to Hronesness.
For him then
they prepared
a huge funeral pyre
on the earth,
hung with helmets,
war-shields,
and bright coats of mail,
as Beowulf had asked.

There they laid
the famous prince
and lamented
that beloved lord.
Warriors then built
the greatest of fires.
Wood-smoke ascended,

dark black over the flames.
That roar wrapped around
sorrowful weeping.
The wind stood still.
Then his bone-house broke,
the heart burned.

Beowulf's queen uttered
a mournful song, spoke
her heart's care with her hair
bound tight. She told earnestly
how she feared evil days,
a great slaughter of warriors,
humiliation and captivity.
Heaven swallowed the smoke.

The Geats built a mound then,
in ten days, high and broad
on the hill, a beacon
for the warrior
widely seen by sailors.
They surrounded the ashes
by a wall, as splendid
as the cleverest
men could make.
In the mound they placed
rings and bracelets
and all such things as
they'd found in the hoard.
They left that treasure
in the hands of the earth,
as it lies still,
as useless to men
as it had been before.

Then twelve warriors
rode round the grave
speaking their sorrow,
reciting praises
for their lord's
courageous deeds.
(A warrior should do so
when his lord dies.)

Thus the Geats
mourned their great lord,

saying he was,
among this world's kings,
the mildest, the gentlest,
the kindest to his people,
and the most eager
for eternal fame.